

Commerce inquiry imperils solar industry, advocates say

WASHINGTON (AP) — In a decision that could dramatically reduce solar imports to the U.S. and undercut President Joe Biden's ambitious climate goals, the Commerce Department said Monday it is investigating whether imports of solar panels from Southeast Asia are circumventing anti-dumping rules that block imports from China.

Clean energy leaders who have enthusiastically backed Biden's agenda condemned the decision — which could lead to retroactive tariffs of up to 240% — and said it could lead to thousands of layoffs in the domestic solar industry and imperil up to 80% of planned solar projects in the U.S. Such an outcome would jeopardize one of Biden's top clean energy goals and run counter to his administration's push for renewable energy such as wind and solar power.



Farmland is seen with solar panels from Cypress Creek Renewables, Oct. 28, 2021, in Thurmont, Md.

Associated Press
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The Commerce Department decision "signals that the Biden administration's talk of supporting solar energy is empty rhetoric," said Heather Zichal, CEO of the American Clean Power Association, a clean-energy group.

Zichal, who was White House energy adviser under President Barack Obama, called on Biden to reverse the decision immediately. "America's solar workers and the clean energy community are watching and will remember," she said, calling implications of the investigation "apocalyptic" for the industry.

"Overnight, the Commerce Departmentdrove a stake through the heart of planned solar projects and choked off up to 80% of the solar panel supply to the U.S," she said, adding that Biden "must fix this now."

The Commerce Department investigation follows a complaint by Auxin Solar, a small California-based manufacturer that said solar panels assembled in four Southeast Asian nations — Cambodia, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam — are circumventing rules intended to block imports of solar cells and panels from China.

Auxin Solar CEO Mamun Rashid said he was grateful that Commerce officials recognized the need to investigate what he called "pervasive backdoor dumping" of solar panels by China, which he said "continues to injure American solar producers" such as his company and others.



U.S. Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo speaks during an address at Brown University, March 15, 2022, in Providence, R.I.

Associated Press

"For years, Chinese solar producers have refused to fairly price their products in the U.S. and have gone to significant lengths to continue undercutting American manufacturers and workers by establishing ... operations in countries not covered by those duties," Rashid said. "Fair trade and enforcement of our trade laws are essential to rebuilding the American solar supply chain and making solar (panels) in America again."

The Commerce Department action comes weeks after Biden extended tariffs imposed by former President Donald Trump on most solar panels imported from China and other countries. In a nod to his efforts to combat climate change and boost clean energy, Biden excluded tariffs on

some panels used in large-scale utility projects.

Biden's Feb. 4 announcement continued many Trump-era tariffs, but he exempted so-called bifacial solar panels that can generate electricity on both sides and are now used in many large solar projects. The technology was still emerging when the tariffs were first imposed by Trump.

Biden also doubled an import quota on solar cells — the main components of panels that go on rooftops and utility sites — to 5 gigawatts, allowing a greater number of imported cells used by domestic manufacturers. The U.S. does not currently produce solar cells, and the White House wanted to make sure domestic suppliers "do not have to pay a tariff on a

key input for their manufacturing process," a senior administration official said last month.

Biden faced a choice among competing constituencies on solar power, a key part of his climate and clean-energy agenda. Labor unions support import restrictions to protect domestic jobs, while the solar industry relies in large part on cheap panels imported from China and other countries, including Vietnam, Malaysia, Thailand and Singapore.

Biden has set a goal to cut planet-warming greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50% below 2005 levels by 2030, and solar power is a key part of that agenda. A report last year by the Energy Department says solar has the potential to supply up to 40% of the nation's

electricity within 15 years — a tenfold increase over current solar output.

Abigail Ross Hopper, president and CEO of the Solar Energy Industries Association, which represents solar installers, called the Commerce investigation a "misstep" that could have a devastating impact on the U.S. solar market and result in tens of thousands of layoffs. The decision could result in retroactive tariffs of up to 240%, a possibility Hopper said would have an immediate and "chilling effect on the solar industry." Additional tariffs could cause the loss of 70,000 American jobs, including 11,000 manufacturing jobs, she said, and could result in a dramatic drop in solar installations and a corresponding increase in planet-warming greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuels such as coal and natural gas.

"Solar prices are increasing, federal climate legislation is stalled and trade restrictions are now compounding," Hopper said. "Commerce should quickly end this investigation to mitigate the harm it will cause for American workers and our nation's efforts to tackle climate change."

Trump approved tariffs on imported solar-energy components in 2018, saying his administration would always defend American workers and businesses from unfair competition. The tariffs were initially set at 30% and later cut to 18% and then 15%. They were set to expire without action by Biden. □



President Donald Trump arrives at the White House in Washington, on Dec. 31, 2020.

Associated Press

Judge: Trump likely committed crimes related to election

WASHINGTON (AP) — A federal judge on Monday asserted it is "more likely than not" that former President Donald Trump committed crimes in his attempt to stop the certification of the 2020 election, ruling to order the release of more than 100 emails from Trump adviser John Eastman to the committee investigating the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol.

The ruling by U.S. District Court Judge David Carter

marked a major legal win for the House panel as it looks to correspondence from Eastman, the lawyer who was consulting with Trump as he attempted to overturn the presidential election.

"Based on the evidence, the Court finds it more likely than not that President Trump corruptly attempted to obstruct the Joint Session of Congress on January 6, 2021," Carter, who was nominated by former

President Bill Clinton, wrote in the ruling submitted in the federal Central District of California. Eastman was trying to withhold documents from the committee on the basis of an attorney-client privilege claim between him and the former president. The committee responded earlier this month, arguing that there is a legal exception allowing the disclosure of communications regarding ongoing or future crimes. □

Nuclear fears in U.S. amid Russia-Ukraine war: AP-NORC poll

By BEN FOX and HANNAH FINGERHUT

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Russia's war on Ukraine has most Americans at least somewhat worried that the U.S. will be drawn directly into the conflict and could be targeted with nuclear weapons, with a new poll reflecting a level of anxiety that has echoes of the Cold War era.

Close to half of Americans say they are very concerned that Russia would directly target the U.S. with nuclear weapons, and an additional 3 in 10 are somewhat concerned about that, according to the new poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. Russian President Vladimir Putin placed his country's nuclear forces on high alert shortly after the Feb. 24 invasion.

Roughly 9 in 10 Americans are at least somewhat concerned that Putin might use a nuclear weapon against Ukraine, including about 6 in 10 who are very concerned.

"He is out of control, and I don't think he really has concern for much of anything but what he wants," said Robin Thompson, a retired researcher from Amherst, Massachusetts. "And he has nuclear weapons." Seventy-one percent of Americans say the invasion has increased the possibility of nuclear weapons being used anywhere in the world.

The poll was conducted before North Korea test-fired its biggest intercontinental ballistic missile on Friday but also shows 51% of Americans saying they are very concerned about the threat to the U.S. posed by North Korea's nuclear program. An additional 29% expressed moderate concern.

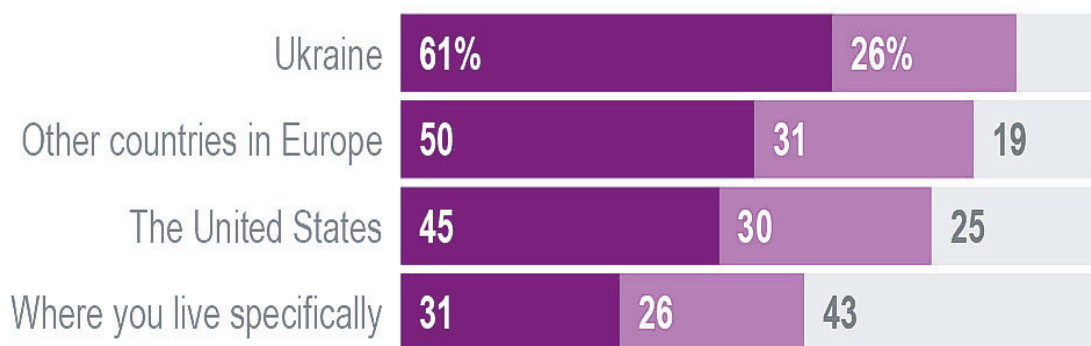
Fear of nuclear war has been a fact of life for decades. The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists has published its "Doomsday Clock" since 1947, showing a theoretical countdown to nuclear annihilation. The latest update, in January,

Many in US concerned about Russia using nuclear weapons

A new AP-NORC poll finds that most Americans are at least somewhat concerned about Russia using nuclear weapons against the United States, and concerns are even deeper about the nuclear threat to Ukraine.

How personally concerned are you about Russia using nuclear weapons that target ____?

Extremely/Very concerned Somewhat concerned
Not very/Not at all concerned



Results based on interviews with 1,082 U.S. adults conducted March 17-21. The margin of error is ± 4.0 percentage points for the full sample.

Source: AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research

AP

put the time at 100 seconds to midnight — unchanged since 2020, but still closer than ever to Armageddon. It's difficult to measure the public's degree of fear over time because polls use different methodologies or pose questions in different ways. Alex Wellerstein, a nuclear historian at the Stevens Institute of Technology in New Jersey, said people often won't bring it up on their own but list it among concerns if given the choice.

The fear, naturally enough, also tends to rise and fall depending on what is happening around the world. "We have these moments that are sort of high crisis periods," Wellerstein said. "And then they come and go, and people forget that we had them."

One particularly high point, he said, was in 1983, a time of tension between the U.S. and the Soviet Union and the year that a highly

watched movie about nuclear war, "The Day After," first aired on TV in the United States.

In the recent AP-NORC poll, close to half of Americans say they are "extremely" or "very" concerned that the U.S. might be drawn into a war with Russia. Roughly 4 in 10 Americans said they are "somewhat" concerned.

The findings reflect not just anxiety about what seems like a proxy war with Russia, even if the U.S. isn't directly involved in the conflict, but also the unprecedented saturation coverage of the war through traditional news outlets and social media.

"We are seeing almost moment by moment what's happening to these poor people," said Linda Woodward, a retired phone company technician from Hot Springs Village, Arkansas. The concern about nuclear war cuts across party lines and even resonates with some young adults who were born after the Cold War.

Caleb Pack, a 21-year-old Republican from Ardmore, Oklahoma, was among those who said that they were "somewhat concerned" that the U.S. would be drawn into the war and that Russia would target the United States with nu-

clear weapons.

"If Russia's end goal is to reclaim Soviet Union territory, that means they're going to push into NATO countries, which obviously I think could escalate very quickly," said Pack, who works in information systems.

Certainly, Russia hasn't taken steps to alleviate concerns. Putin issued what appeared to be an ominous threat when he reminded the world in a speech the day he launched the invasion that his country is "one of the most powerful nuclear states."

In that context, concern is justified, said Tara Drozdenko, director of the global security program at the Union of Concerned Scientists. "Whenever you have nuclear-armed nations getting closer to conflict, there's always a risk of nuclear escalation," she said. So far, NATO and the Biden administration have been careful not to escalate the situation, Drozdenko said. But she believes the public should use this time to push for changes to limit the risk. That would include adopting a formal policy that the U.S. would not strike first with nuclear weapons, to reduce the risk of an accidental strike by an adversary, and taking the final authority for a launch out of the hands of the president alone.

Historian Wellerstein also sees a possible upside to the heightened state of concern. He cited research showing that a crisis can have the long-term effect of getting people more engaged with an issue.

"This thing with Ukraine will inevitably end, hopefully sooner rather than later," he said. "This could be an opportunity for getting a lot more people, especially younger people, invested in this as a political issue."q



Some 40 vehicles collide on snowy Pennsylvania highway

POTTSVILLE, Pa. (AP) — A collision involving more than 40 vehicles closed a portion of Interstate 81 in Pennsylvania and sent more than a dozen people to area hospitals on Monday, according to the Schuylkill County Office of Emergency Management. The crash in northeast Pennsylvania happened around 10:30 a.m. and John Blickley, the deputy emergency management coordinator for the agency, said officials believe a snow squall clouded visibility and likely contributed to the accident. About 40 vehicles including multiple tractor trailers were involved in the initial crash, he said.

No fatalities had been reported to the Schuylkill County agency, but Blickley said emergency personnel from four different counties responded and took about 20 patients to area hospitals for treatment. The county coroner's office did not return requests for information about any fatalities. Blickley said three tractor trailers carrying unknown cargo were on fire when emergency personnel responded. Smaller fires broke out in other vehicles as well but all had



Interstate 81 North near the Minersville exit, Foster Twp., Pa., was the scene of a multi-vehicle crash on Monday, March 28, 2022.

Associated Press

been largely brought under control, he said. Pennsylvania State Police Trooper David Beohm said Monday afternoon that he could not confirm any fatalities but he said police haven't been able to investigate because a fire was still burning among a number of crashed cars and trucks.

He estimated a total of 50 to 60 vehicles were involved in the crash, including some tractor trailers

and a number of smaller vehicles.

"We can't do anything while there's still an active fire going, and fire (officials) say it will probably be another one to two hours until they get it extinguished," Beohm said.

Many fire units were at the scene, including a number of tankers coming to replenish water because there was no water source from hydrants on scene.

People whose vehicles

were in the crash and the "walking wounded" were taken to the Wegman's distribution center in an industrial park near the crash, he said, and a reunification center had been set up at the Goodwill Fire Company in Minersville.

Footage uploaded to social media on Monday showed a tractor-trailer smash into a large dump truck, turning it nearly 180 degrees. Another large truck spewed black smoke

and orange flames into the air and an SUV struck a passenger car sending the sedan spinning, narrowly missing its driver who stood on the shoulder of the highway shrouded in snow and fog.

The person who posted the video did not immediately respond to requests seeking additional information. People off camera can be heard yelling as the cascade of crashes unfolds with multiple vehicles colliding in less than a minute. The National Weather Service had warned of "numerous brief heavy snow squalls with very poor visibility."

"The squalls will quickly reduce the visibility to under one-half of a mile and coat the roads with snow," forecasters said, urging drivers to get off the road if possible or turn on hazard lights "and gradually slow down to avoid a chain reaction vehicular accident."

Mike Colbert, a forecaster with the National Weather Service office in State College, said the weather service started issuing warnings for snow squalls a few years ago, and pileups of the kind being reported were the reason they began doing so. □

Montpelier ends power-share with enslaved descendants group



Visitors walk around the restored home of former President James Madison's home Montpelier in Orange, Va., Aug. 13, 2008.

Associated Press

ORANGE, Va. (AP) — Less than a year after the board that manages James Madison's Montpelier estate in Virginia announced plans to share authority equally with descendants of peo-

ple once enslaved there, the board has voted to strip power-sharing status from a group representing African Americans who trace their roots to the historic estate. The Montpelier Descen-

dants Committee chose three descendants of enslaved people serving on the board and the foundation picked another two, but Friday's vote means the committee can't name future members, giving the foundation greater control over the board's makeup, The Washington Post reported.

"It is a complete reversal of their public commitment that was made on June 16, 2021," said James French, head of the committee and a member of the Montpelier Foundation's board. "It's a rejection of the principle of equality of descendant voices and it's very unfortunate, because it is a missed opportunity for Montpelier to make history."

The last two years have seen heightened ten-

sions between the board and the committee, while Montpelier's reputation as a pioneer in empowering traditionally marginalized groups has grown.

At issue is how the estate frames the history surrounding Madison, the nation's fourth president who is known as the father of the Constitution.

The board "wants to continue telling the public a whitewashed narrative about the Constitution and its chief architect and deciding what should be said about the 300 people Madison owned," Bettye Kearse, a board member who was put forward by the descendants committee, told the Washington Post in an email.

Foundation chairman Gene Hickok said the board

isn't backing away from its commitment to fully represent descendants on the board, an idea known as structural parity, but working with the committee has been difficult and the board wants to be able to choose descendant members from a wider pool.

"This is an effort to reset the process," Hickok said. "It certainly doesn't have the board backing away from parity. We are very committed to parity. The challenge has been organizationally getting there."

The change upset many estate staffers, who say the committee of descendants has been a partner in interpreting the history of Madison, his family and the roughly 300 enslaved people who lived and died there over 140 years. □

E.U. wants to end golden passport schemes, targets Russians

By **SAMUEL PETREQUIN**

BRUSSELS (AP) — The European Commission recommended Monday that EU nations end golden passport schemes that allow wealthy people to buy their way into the bloc's citizenship, and urged them to assess whether Russian oligarchs linked to the Kremlin or who support the war in Ukraine should be stripped of citizenship rights previously granted.

The European Commission launched infringement procedures against Cyprus and Malta in 2020 about their golden passports schemes, and the Russian war in Ukraine has put an increased focus on the topic.

The Commission warned that some Russian or Belarusian citizens who are among the 877 individuals targeted by asset freezes and travel bans imposed since 2014, or who support the Russian invasion of its neighbor, might have acquired EU citizenship or had access to the Schengen area via these schemes.

The EU's executive arm said the countries should now consider whether they



European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen chairs the weekly College of Commissioners meeting at EU headquarters in Brussels, Wednesday, March 16, 2022.

Associated Press

should withdraw golden passports issued to such individuals. In addition, it recommended immediately taking away residence permits that have been granted under an investor scheme to Russian or Belarusian citizens supporting the war or subject to sanctions.

Malta and Bulgaria currently have citizenship by

investment plans in operation, while Cyprus which scrapped its own program in November 2020 is only processing applications submitted before that date. Bulgarian lawmakers recently backed a decision to end its golden passport program.

Cyprus cancelled the program after an undercover TV report allegedly showed

the parliamentary speaker and a powerful lawmaker claiming that they could skirt rules to issue a passport to a fictitious Chinese investor who had supposedly been convicted of fraud at home.

A 2021 report found that more than half of a total 6,779 passports were issued unlawfully to relatives of wealthy investors over the

program's 13-year run that generated over 8 billion euros. The report said the government had incorrectly interpreted the law on issuing passports to relatives and also found that nearly 770 foreigners were wrongly granted citizenship primarily because of inadequate vetting.

Cypriot President Nicos Anastasiades said he believes that only one person "on the list of banned oligarchs or Duma members" has a Cypriot passport. Asked if this individual's passport would be revoked, Anastasiades said: "We'll see, we're now among those who support measures that buttress the rule of law."

According to the EU Parliament, twelve EU countries operate residence by investment schemes. The minimum investment levels range from 60,000 euros to 1,250,000 euros.

"European values are not for sale. We consider that the sale of citizenship through 'golden passports' is illegal under EU law and poses serious risks to our security," said Didier Reyniers, the Commissioner for Justice and Consumers. □

N. Korea's Kim vows to develop more powerful means of attack

By **HYUNG-JIN KIM**

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea said Monday leader Kim Jong Un has vowed to develop more powerful means of attack, days after the country's first intercontinental ballistic missile launch in more than four years.

The statement suggests North Korea might perform additional launches or even test a nuclear device soon as it pushes to modernize its arsenal and increase pressure on the Biden administration while nuclear diplomacy remains stalled. Last Thursday, the North performed its 12th round of weapons tests this year, launching the newly developed, long-range Hwasong-17, which analysts say was designed to reach anywhere in the U.S. mainland.

During a photo session with

scientists and others involved in the Hwasong-17 test, Kim expressed a resolve to build up the country's attack capability to cope with threats, according to the official Korean Central News Agency.

"Only when one is equipped with the formidable striking capabilities, overwhelming military power that cannot be stopped by anyone, one can prevent a war, guarantee the security of the country and contain and put under control all threats and blackmails by the imperialists," KCNA quoted Kim as saying.

Kim said North Korea will develop more "powerful strike means" and also expressed his conviction and expectation that his country will "more vigorously perfect the nuclear war deterrence of the country," KCNA said.

North Korea said the Hwasong-17 flew to a maximum altitude of 6,248 kilometers (3,880 miles) and traveled 1,090 kilometers (680 miles) during a 67-minute flight before landing in waters between the Korean Peninsula and Japan. Outside experts said if the missile is fired on a standard trajectory, flatter than the steep test angle, it could fly as far as 15,000 kilometers (9,320 miles), enough to reach anywhere in the U.S. mainland and beyond.

Believed to be about 25 meters (82 feet) long, the Hwasong-17 is the North's longest-range weapon and, by some estimates, the world's biggest road-mobile ballistic missile system. Its size suggests the missile is meant to carry multiple nuclear warheads, given the North already has single-warhead ICBMs



In this photo distributed by the North Korean government, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, center, walks around what it says is a Hwasong-17 intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) on the launcher, at an undisclosed location in North Korea on March 24, 2022.

Associated Press

that could also hit most of the U.S.

U.S.-led diplomacy aimed at convincing North Korea to denuclearize in return for economic and political benefits largely has stalled since 2019. The Biden ad-

ministration has urged North Korea to return to talks without any preconditions, but Pyongyang has responded Washington must drop its hostility first and has taken steps to expand his weapons arsenals. □

Arab, U.S. top diplomats in Israel as Mideast dynamic shifts

By **MATTHEW LEE**

SDE BOKER, Israel (AP) — Israel on Monday hosted the foreign ministers of four Arab nations and the United States in a bid to strengthen its position in a rapidly shifting Middle East. The gathering brought together the top diplomats from Egypt and three Arab nations — the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Morocco — that signed the so-called Abraham Accords to normalize relations with Israel under the Trump administration.

But the handshakes and group photos were overshadowed by a deadly attack in central Israel, concern over the potential revival of the Iran nuclear deal and Israel's still-festering conflict with the Palestinians, who dismissed the conference.

Meeting at a resort in Israel's southern Negev Desert, the ministers and Secretary of State Antony Blinken pledged to expand cooperation to include energy, environmental and security matters and try to bring others into the agreements. "Just a few years ago this gathering would have been impossible to imagine," Blinken said. "The United States has and will continue to strongly support a process that is transforming the region and beyond."

As the ministers gathered late Sunday, a deadly shooting rampage claimed by the extremist group Islamic State killed two young police officers in central Israel. Participants also repeatedly expressed misgivings over Iranian military behavior across the region and the possible renewal of the international nuclear accord.

Jordan, a close U.S. ally that strongly supports Pales-



After meeting for the Negev Summit, Bahrain's Foreign Minister Abdullatif bin Rashid al-Zayani, left, Egypt's Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry, Israel's Foreign Minister Yair Lapid, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Morocco's Foreign Minister Nasser Bourita, and United Arab Emirates' Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, pose for a photograph Monday, March 28, 2022, in Sde Boker, Israel.

Associated Press

tinian statehood, declined to attend the meeting. Instead, King Abdullah II visited the Israeli-occupied West Bank in solidarity with the Palestinians.

The high-profile visit — his first in nearly five years — and Jordan's absence from the ministers' meeting, were reminders that the Palestinian issue has not disappeared from the regional agenda.

"The region cannot enjoy security and stability without a just and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian issue," the king said as he met with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, who welcomed the visit. Neither leader mentioned the meeting hosted by Israel.

Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh tweeted that "Arab normalization meetings" that don't end Israel's military occupation of lands the Palestinians want for a state "are just an illusion, a mirage, and a free reward for Israel."

Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid said the group was "making history" as he announced the gathering would become an annual event. He said the countries were forming a partnership

based on technology, religious tolerance, security and intelligence cooperation.

"This new architecture, the shared capabilities we are building, intimidates and deters our common enemies, first and foremost Iran and its proxies," he said. "They certainly have something to fear. What will stop them is not hesitation or being conciliatory but rather determination and strength."

The Arab ministers condemned Sunday night's deadly shooting in the city of Hadera — but they also repeatedly said it was critical to address the century-old Mideast conflict.

"We did highlight the importance of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, importance of maintaining the credibility and viability of the two-state solution," said Egypt's foreign minister, Sameh Shoukry. "This an important issue."

The Biden administration has urged Israel and the Palestinians to take steps to reduce tensions and create conditions for eventually renewing peace talks. But it has made clear that it has no immediate plans to press the sides to renew negotiations. The last serious

and substantive talks broke down more than a decade ago.

Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett has said he opposes a Palestinian state and has no intention of restarting peace talks. Instead, he has called for steps to improve economic conditions for the Palestinians to help reduce tensions.

The Biden administration has meanwhile been working to renew the 2015 international nuclear deal with Iran. The agreement placed curbs on Iran's nuclear program in exchange for billions of dollars in sanctions relief.

With support from Israel, the Trump administration withdrew from the deal in 2018, causing it to unravel.

Although Iran has since raced ahead with its nuclear program, Israel and Gulf Arab countries are deeply concerned about restoring the original deal. Israel fears it does not include enough safeguards to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons.

Both Israel and its Gulf allies also believe that relief from economic sanctions will allow Iran to step up its support for militant groups in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen and the Palestinian

territories.

Bahrain's foreign minister, Abdullatif al-Zayani, said the need to cooperate was made "more urgent" by attacks by Iranian-backed militant groups and the unresolved nuclear issue.

"We need to put into practice the principles behind the accords, mainly those of dialogue, cooperation and mutual respect," he said. "By doing so, we will demonstrate to the whole region what can be achieved by working together."

Blinken sought to address the concerns about Iran on Sunday, saying that the U.S. sees "eye to eye" with Israel on the goal of making sure Iran never builds a nuclear weapon.

Underscoring regional anxieties, Israel's government hastily arranged the meeting of top diplomats from Arab countries that have normalized relations with Israel. Sudan, the fourth Arab country to normalize ties with Israel during the Trump administration, is mired in turmoil following a military coup in October and did not attend the meeting in Israel.

The two-day gathering, with Blinken, took place at the kibbutz in the Negev Desert where Israel's founding father, David Ben-Gurion, retired and is buried.

Lapid on Monday visited Ben-Gurion's grave with Blinken. But the Arab ministers did not join them, citing scheduling issues. Such a visit would have been a remarkable step given the sensitivities with the Palestinians over Israel's establishment. Palestinians blame Ben-Gurion for their "naqba," or catastrophe, the term they use for the mass displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians during the war surrounding Israel's establishment in 1948.

Blinken on Sunday also traveled to Ramallah in the occupied West Bank to meet with Abbas and stress to him the U.S. commitment to help the Palestinian people and encourage a resumption in long-stalled peace talks with Israel. □

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Maduro foe accused of evading lawsuit by ex Green Beret

By JOSHUA GOODMAN

Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — A Venezuelan political strategist allegedly threatened to shoot a gun through the door of his luxury Miami condo to avoid being served a lawsuit by a former U.S. Green Beret he hired as part of a plan to oust President Nicolas Maduro, according to a court hearing Monday.

Jordan Goudreau in October 2020 sued JJ Rendón for \$1.4 million, alleging breach of contract, after Rendón walked away from a plan he briefly pushed on behalf of the Venezuelan opposition to depose Maduro with the help of the three-time Bronze Star recipient and Iraq war veteran.

Goudreau nonetheless plowed ahead, traveling to Colombia to help train a ragtag army of volunteers at secret camps set up by deserters from Venezuela's military. Operation Gideon — or the Bay of Pigs, as the bloody fiasco came to be known — ended with six insurgents dead and two of Goudreau's former Special Forces buddies behind bars in Caracas.

Rendón denied making any such threats to avoid being served the com-



This photo released by the Venezuelan Miraflores presidential press office shows President Nicolas Maduro speaking over military equipment that he says was seized during an incursion into Venezuela, during his televised address from Miraflores in Caracas, Venezuela, May 4, 2020.

Associated Press

plaint, saying that his door to his apartment is bullet-proofed and he doesn't possess any guns.

"It's another crazy, delusional and baseless claim inside an originally baseless lawsuit," he told The Associated Press in a brief statement.

Goudreau and his Florida-based company, Silvercorp USA, accuse Rendón of defaulting on an agreement they had signed earlier to detain, capture or

remove Maduro and install in his place Juan Guaidó, who the U.S. and dozens of allies recognize as Venezuela's legitimate leader.

The case has been dormant since Goudreau filed his 133-page complaint, which reads like an intrigue-filled Netflix series involving everything from clandestine airstrips to aides to former Vice President Mike Pence.

At a hearing on Monday in

Miami, Goudreau's attorney asserted that the reason the case hasn't moved forward is because Rendón has repeatedly and intentionally refused to accept the summons — a basic first step in any civil lawsuit.

According to Goudreau, a court certified server attempted to personally deliver a summons on seven occasions starting in August 2021 — almost 10 months after the lawsuit was filed —

by knocking unsuccessfully on the door of Rendón's downtown Miami apartment.

During the last attempt, at 8:30 p.m. on Oct. 25, he was informed by the building's front desk that Rendón had called down to say he would "shoot through the door" if he ever attempted to knock again, according to a sworn affidavit filed ahead of Monday's hearing.

"My process server at that time decided to do a strategic withdrawal," attorney Gustavo Garcia-Montes said during Monday's brief, one-minute hearing, which ended with Judge Carlos Lopez granting Goudreau's request that Rendón be formally notified through alternative means available to the court, such as certified mail or an advertisement in a newspaper.

Rendón has questioned Goudreau's motives for bringing a lawsuit he considers frivolous.

He's asserted that the agreement they signed, for which he reimbursed Goudreau \$50,000 to cover expenses, was exploratory in nature and in any case nullified months before he launched the ill-fated raid on his own. □

South Sudan's deputy president warns of return 'back to war'

By DENG MACHOL

Associated Press

JUBA, South Sudan (AP) — South Sudan's vice president is urging regional mediators to intervene to protect the country's fragile peace deal, warning of a return to war amid alleged attacks by government troops on his forces.

Riek Machar accused President Salva Kiir of violating a 2018 truce in a letter to the regional mediator, the 8-nation Intergovernmental Authority on Development, or IGAD.

"The security situation in South Sudan has been deteriorating for the last few months," Machar said in the letter. "Therefore, we request, as a matter of urgency, the intervention of IGAD and other interna-

tional partners to prevail on President Salva Kiir not to take this country back to war."

There was heavy military deployment in the capital, Juba, Monday near the international airport and the presidential palace, highlighting growing tensions. Puok Both, a spokesman for Machar, confirmed the deployment of government troops in parts of Juba, saying "we don't know their intentions."

But in a televised speech later on Monday, Kiir said that "the presence of security forces in the streets does not mean that there is insecurity in Juba."

South Sudanese government troops and forces loyal to Machar have recently clashed in Upper Nile and

Unity states, which are seen as Machar's strongholds.

There were high hopes for peace and stability when oil-rich South Sudan gained its long-fought independence from Sudan in 2011. But the country slid into civil war in December 2013 largely based on ethnic divisions when forces loyal to Kiir battled those loyal to Machar.

Tens of thousands of people were killed in the civil war which ended with a 2018 peace agreement that brought Kiir and Machar together in a government of national unity.

But challenges remain, including the government's failure to implement promised reforms including completing the unification of the army command.



South Sudan's president Salva Kiir, left, and vice-president Riek Machar, right, shake hands after meetings to discuss outstanding issues to the peace deal on Oct. 20, 2019.

Associated Press

Kiir on Friday issued a decree in which he offered five command positions in the army and the police to his rivals, a unilateral decision opposed by Machar. The U.S., the U.K. and Nor-

way — the troika supporting South Sudan's peace deal — said last week they were concerned that the new outbreak of fighting threatens to undermine the government's unity. □

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Initiative to support local artists and revive Oranjestad



Oranjestad - The opening of "The Galleria" at Harbor House in Weststraat took place recently.

'The Galleria' is an initiative by Harbor House and Pering Group to support our local artists by offering each artist a pop-up gallery to exhibit their art to visitors

as well as the community of Aruba. During the opening Sr. Alberto Perret-Gentil CEO of Pering Group, explained that the vision of Pering Group is to contribute to Weststraat and Werfstraat as an art destination to attract tourists and locals back into the downtown of Oranjestad. This vision is

based on the ideology of 'Orange Economy' as an additional support to the 'Blue Economy' in this specific area.

The purpose of 'Orange Economy' is to stimulate the economy based on creative activities with cultural and artistic content.

The artists who will be exhibiting their art during the first season of 'The Galleria' is Armando Goedgedrag,



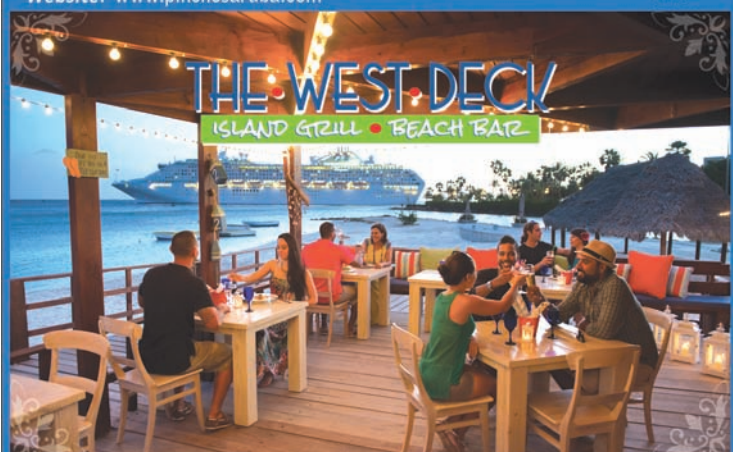
Cado de Lannoy, Suelyn Dankerlui, The Art Spot

by Nicole & Marie, Luque Juan, Federico Cabello, Rudyomar Leysner and Erika Moran. Each artist explains a little bit about their work and expressed their gratitude towards receiving this opportunity that in one way or another contributes to the revitalization of Oranjestad.

For more information visit 'The Galleria' or contact each artist via their social media. □



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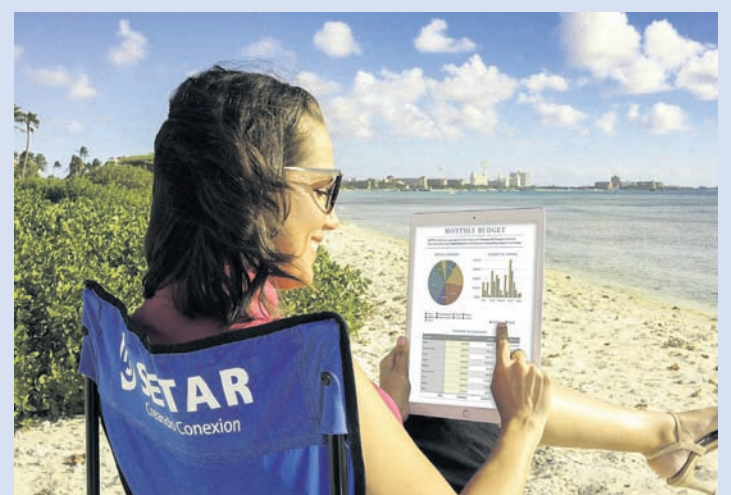
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Coming Soon: Auntie Anne's Pretzels**New beginnings after the kitchen table and
beyond with new restaurant:
Infini by Chef Urvin Croes**

PALM BEACH — After spearheading *The Kitchen Table* for five years, receiving notable recognitions in *USA Today*, *The Daily Meal* and earning the #1 spot on Tripadvisor's list of Fine Dining Restaurants in the Caribbean, Chef Urvin Croes has now moved on to higher heights. Infini, his new chef's table, which opened at the Blue Residences in November 2020, allows the Michelin-trained Aruban culinary artist to create gastronomic experiences unconfined by cultural or regional expectations. The former *The Kitchen Table* space has since been renovated into a suitable culinary studio to host this vision. In describing these changes, Croes says: "We opened up the entire kitchen and elevated the dining tables so guests have a front row stadium-like view of each step of the preparations. The spotlights, which we carefully choreograph, follow the plates' transition from blank canvases into culinary works of art."

"It is a flavor that you cannot define, but you can create."

He had been sitting on the first menu for over a year. Inspired by umami, one of the five basic tastes, and also Japanese for "essence of deliciousness", Chef Croes strived to organically produce this palate in each dish of the eight-course Chef's Impression. "It is a flavor



that you cannot define, but you can create. Take our popular langoustine for example; we combined elements that are rarely paired together: the bitter, sour and salty flavors of the lemon cream, kombucha, green grapes, watercress and achiote, fused with the sweet and delicate taste of the langoustine induce ultimate umami."

After hosting the first menu for three months, the Executive Chef introduced a second tour de force in February 2021 — this time a pescatarian menu dedicated to Lent, of which Croes has to say: "I wanted to focus on the finest fish in the world, they are the protagonists of this season." Visitors can experience the second Chef's Impression until May 2021, at which point Croes and his team will reveal exciting new flavors for the summer.

"Without a great team, there is no great chef"

"There is very little I can do by myself. Without a great team, there is no great chef", says Croes, while raving about the six young professionals sharing his kitchen. All graduates of Aruba's EPI College and familiar faces to the Chef as each one has completed their culinary internship under his guidance. In fact, Infini's Chef de Cuisine, Ashwin Maduro, was Urvin's very first student, before relocating to Amsterdam, where he worked at several Michelin-starred restaurants, including &mo-shik (formally &Samhoud Places). Having recently returned to Aruba, Chef Maduro is thrilled to be reunited with his first mentor and hopes to secure Aruba's space on the global map of unique culinary experiences. Similarly, after four years working in the two-Michelin starred restaurant Spectrum, Chef de Partie Moises Ramirez returned home to share his vast experience in formulating recipes with meticulous attention to detail and consistency. Further down the kitchen line, Chef de Partie Alvaro Yi, who has worked at the two-Michelin starred FG Restaurant, is all about expressing himself through cooking and plating to create art that you can eat. Mixologist Marc-Anthony Rannis brings eight years of experience in the fine dining indus-



try to Infini. His fine craftsmanship is displayed in the unparalleled wine pairings and signature cocktails, which include his personally homemade syrups, garnishes and fresh local ingredients. Maître D' and Junior Sommelier Jessica Theysen, who previously managed renowned Chef Dennis Huwae's Restaurant Daalder in Amsterdam, is a true storyteller. From the moment she serves the Salinity welcome drink and the culinary tale begins, she takes you on an adventure around the world to discover never-before-tasted combinations. Then, towards the end of the night, it is his time to shine — Pastry Chef Jean-Claude Werleman, that is. After spending the last two years perfecting his recipes in the Pastry Department of the Ritz Carlton Aruba, Werleman joins Infini to continue exploring his passion for experimenting with colors and bold flavors.

"It's time to show that Aruba is a culinary destination of its own"

"The goal is to leave our visitors speechless. The look on their faces whenever they take the first bite says it all and it is priceless", shares Croes, with a smile. Reclaiming the spot of number one restaurant in the Caribbean is also in sight, but this time he will not stop there. "In the end, we want Aruba to be recognized for its culinary mastery. We have trained the best culinary artists right here on the island and they have proven themselves internationally in the most renowned kitchens in the world. Now it is time to show that Aruba is a culinary destination of its own. Who knows where that will take us; hopefully to infinity and beyond."

Infini located at Blue Residences currently serves an eight-course Chef's Impression to up to 21 guests starting at 6:30PM. To make reservations visit www.infiniaruba.com or call +297-699-3982. □

Exhibition 'The Riches of our Beaches' by Louder Krozendijk



ORANJESTAD - Aruba recently celebrated a national holiday in which Aruba's rich culture is celebrated, specifically on this day the flag and hymn of our Island is celebrated.

As part of the celebration many people and organizations on the Island put on display many collections and art exhibitions for visitors and the community of Aruba to see and admire, but also learn about Aruba's culture and little details that we may not notice of our Island at first glance.

One of these people is Lourdes Krozendijk, who on that special day put on display her wonderful and extensive collection of sea shells. She had a collection that varied in sizes, shapes, color and showed all the life and character of our beautiful beaches. She was visited by the

Minister of Culture who thanked her for the exhibition and for the explanation she provided about her collection, which started more than 25 years ago.

We'd like to take this chance to remind our visitors that conform the international treaty of CITES and our local law which protects our Flora & Fauna, it is completely prohibited to take any seashell, sand and coral outside of Aruba. This is in order to protect our environment. The high amount of seashell, sand and corals confiscated is very strange and it is suspected that our own locals may be the ones selling these to the tourists, which is unacceptable.

Upon confiscation at the airport the tourist also faces a fine that they have to pay before leaving. This is surely not a pleasant experience for

the tourist. This also leads to a negative reaction which can put our tourism in a negative light.

Let's all give nature the respect it deserves by protecting our environment. Do not purchase seashells, white sand and corals that any local collects from our shores to sell these to our tourists, and do not collect this yourself to take home. Lourdes gives a beautiful example of what we as locals can accomplish if we protect our Island and the beautiful nature it provides for us and the beauty that our visitors can share with their loved ones if you help us locals protect it too.

We want our future generations and visitors to enjoy the beauty of our beaches, shells and corals. Let's all protect what is ours! ☐

3 tasks for new retirees that will pay off later

By **LIZ WESTON** of NerdWallet

After a working lifetime of alarm clocks and meetings, you might be looking forward to a lot more unstructured time once you retire. But taking care of one more to-do list early on can set you up for a better retirement.

The following assumes you've already done some basic financial planning. Ideally, before you retire, you'll create a budget, decide when to claim Social Security, settle on a sustainable withdrawal rate from your retirement funds and figure out how you'll cover health care expenses. If any of those topics are still a mystery, consider talking to a fee-only financial advisor. If money's tight, you may qualify for free or low cost consultations through the Foundation for Financial Planning, National Association of Personal Financial Advisors or the Association for Financial Counseling & Planning Education, among other organizations. Even longtime do-it-yourselfers should consider getting expert retirement planning advice, says Catherine Azeles, a certified financial planner and investment consultant in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Although your days may be simpler without workplace demands, your finances

often become more complex.

"There's a lot more that goes into the distribution phase of retirement than the accumulation phase," Azeles says.

After your plan is in place, here's what to do after you actually retire.

TWEAK YOUR SPENDING PLAN

Inflation and volatile markets can be problematic for anyone, but they are particularly dangerous to retirees. If you're not earning an income, you can't ask for a raise to compensate for rising prices. Meanwhile, bad markets early in retirement can dramatically increase the chances of running short of money.

One way to cope is to identify discretionary spending that you can cut. Trimming expenses can help you offset inflation, but it can also help you ride out bad markets, says Katherine Roy, chief retirement strategist for J.P. Morgan Asset Management.

Traditionally, retirees were encouraged to withdraw a certain percentage of their investments the first year — 4% was a popular figure — and increase the withdrawal by the amount of inflation each year. J.P. Morgan research, however, shows people are less likely to run short of money if they forgo that inflation-



This undated file photo provided by NerdWallet shows Liz Weston, a columnist for personal finance website NerdWallet.com.

Associated Press

ary increase when markets return less than 5% in a year, Roy says.

GET GOOD TAX ADVICE

Many people's tax situations change when they transition into retirement, and they may have unique opportunities to manage their tax bills, Azeles says.

Good savers, for example, could find themselves in a higher tax bracket at age 72, when required minimum withdrawals from retirement accounts typically start. In some cases, it can make sense to do partial Roth conversions in your 60s to spread out and reduce that tax bill, Azeles says. A tax pro or financial planner can help you determine

if conversions are a good idea, and if so, how much to convert each year to avoid triggering a higher tax bracket or Medicare surcharges.

Another way to reduce your tax bill if you have more money than you need is to donate to charities directly from your IRA. So-called qualified charitable distributions can start at age 70 ½.

Even if you're not awash in cash, your taxes may be higher than you expect. Most retirement income — including Social Security, pension payouts and retirement fund withdrawals — is potentially taxable. If you don't have taxes withheld

from these payments, you may need to file and pay estimated quarterly taxes to avoid penalties.

TEND TO YOUR HEALTH

Too often, preventable diseases cut lives short or limit what people can do in retirement. Consider investing some of your newly free hours in maintaining or improving your physical health.

A medical checkup with your doctor can help you identify any conditions that need treatment, get up to date on immunizations and determine what screenings you should schedule. You also can discuss how to start or increase an exercise plan. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends 150 minutes of moderate exercise — such as brisk walking — every week, plus at least two weekly sessions of muscle-strengthening activities for all adults. People ages 65 and older should add balance exercises (you can find them online), such as standing on one foot. Your mental and emotional health are important, as well. The people who struggle the most in retirement are often the ones who don't have a plan for replacing some of the rewarding aspects of work, including a sense of purpose, structure and social interaction, Roy says. □

Walmart to end cigarette sales in some stores

By **ANNE D'INNOCENZIO**

NEW YORK (AP) — Walmart will no longer sell cigarettes in some of its stores though tobacco sales can be a significant revenue generator. Wall Street Journal was the first to report the development Monday. It noted some stores in California, Florida, Arkansas and New Mexico were on the list, citing anonymous sources and store visits. Walmart is not the first national retail chain to cut off cigarette sales even on a trial basis, but it is the largest. Target ended cigarette sales in 1996 and the drug-

store chain CVS Health did the same in 2014.

CVS Health sales in areas outside the pharmacy fell for a few quarters after it pulled tobacco products, and the company had predicted that missing tobacco products would hurt annual earnings by 7 to 8 cents per share.

Overall revenue has grown every year at CVS, however, after a number of acquisitions and changes to its stores bolstered the company's health care offerings. CVS Health bought the health insurer Aetna in 2017.

Decisions about removing

cigarettes at Walmart will be made on a store-by-store basis according to the business and particular market, the company said Monday.

"We are always looking at ways to meet our customers' needs while still operating an efficient business," Walmart said in a prepared statement.

Health officials say that cigarette smoking causes about one of every five deaths in the U.S. each year.

Walmart Inc., based in Bentonville, Arkansas, announced in 2019 that it was getting out of the vaping



In this Sept. 3, 2019, file photo, a Walmart logo forms part of a sign outside a Walmart store, in Walpole, Mass.

Associated Press

business and would stop selling electronic cigarettes at its stores and also at Sam's Clubs. It said at

the time the decision was based on "growing federal, state and local regulatory complexity." □

CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

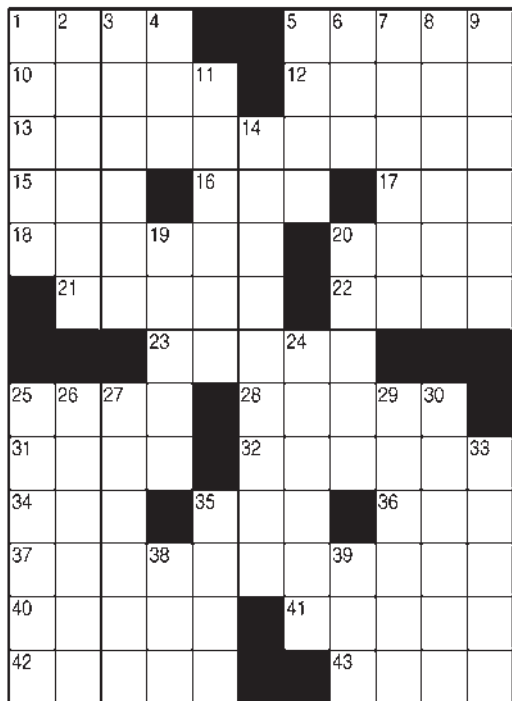
- ACROSS**
- 41 Nick of 1 Gift- "Affliction"
 - 42 College wrapping need heads
 - 5 March 14, 43 Garden to math pest fans

- DOWN**
- 10 Pop stars
 - 12 Pal, to Pedro
 - 13 Indiscreet
 - 15 Blunder
 - 16 Cargo unit
 - 17 "The Raven" writer
 - 18 Handles
 - 20 Relate
 - 21 Uses a towel
 - 22 Track figures
 - 23 Put up
 - 25 Carpet type
 - 28 Sounded sheepish
 - 31 Scoop holder
 - 32 Never before seen
 - 34 Director Lee
 - 35 Building wing
 - 36 Chicken — king
 - 37 Supple
 - 40 Film's Flynn



Yesterday's answer

- 1 Floor squares
- 2 Found charming
- 3 Less well-off
- 4 High trains
- 5 Aspirin target
- 6 Little rascal
- 7 Dropped down
- 8 Ancient
- 9 Alpine calls
- 11 Hunting dog
- 14 Fumble result
- 19 Long attack
- 20 Add up
- 24 Radio show format
- 25 Climbed
- 26 Writer Balzac
- 27 Soft wool
- 29 Make possible
- 30 Take out
- 33 Crossed the creek
- 35 Snaky fish
- 38 Bart, to Homer
- 39 Cut, as hay



3-29

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

3-29 CRYPTOQUOTE

Q B P K S X G W T I X T Z G Q G I I ;

T Z B K T V B X T F V S B I V F B K G ;

M W G B Z I B W G N F W G U G W .

— C B Q X M T I V G D

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: YOU'RE NOT REALLY FAMOUS UNTIL YOU'RE A PEZ DISPENSER. — CARRIE FISHER

Insider Q&A: Ex-Google AI skeptic Timnit Gebru starts anew



Timnit Gebru poses for a photo in Stanford, Calif., Monday, March 21, 2022.

Associated Press

By MATT O'BRIEN
AP Technology Writer

When she co-led Google's Ethical AI team, Timnit Gebru was a prominent insider voice questioning the tech industry's approach to artificial intelligence.

That was before Google pushed her out of the company more than a year ago. Now Gebru is trying to make change from the outside as the founder of the Distributed Artificial Intelligence Research Institute, or DAIR.

Born to Eritrean parents in Ethiopia, Gebru spoke with The Associated Press recently about how poorly Big Tech's AI priorities — and its AI-fueled social media platforms — serve Africa and elsewhere. The new institute focuses on AI research from the perspective of the places and people most likely to experience its harms.

She's also co-founder of the group Black in AI, which promotes Black employment and leadership in the field. And she's known for co-authoring a landmark 2018 study that found racial and gender bias in facial recognition software. The interview has been edited for length and clarity.

Q: What was the impetus for DAIR?

A: After I got fired from Google, I knew I'd be blacklisted from a whole bunch of large tech companies. The ones that I wouldn't be -- it would be just very difficult to work in that kind of environment. I just wasn't going to do that anymore. When I decided to (start DAIR), the very first thing that came to my mind is that I want it to be distributed.

I saw how people in certain places just can't influence the actions of tech companies and the course that AI development is taking. If there is AI to be built or researched, how do you do it well? You want to involve communities that are usually at the margins so that they can benefit. When there's cases when it should not be built, we can say, 'Well, this should not be built.' We're not coming at it from a perspective of tech solutionism.

Q: What are the most concerning AI applications that deserve more scrutiny?

A: What's so depressing to me is that even applications where now so many

people seem to be more aware about the harms — they are increasing rather than decreasing. We've been talking about face recognition and surveillance based on this technology for a long time. There are some wins: a number of cities and municipalities have banned the use of facial recognition by law enforcement, for instance. But then the government is using all of these technologies that we've been warning about. □

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Week 5/1315 (19k);
Week 8/1113 (18k);
Week 8/1409 (18k);
Week 9/1218 (16k);
Week 10/1207 (16k);
Week 13/1509 (13k);
Week 14/1308 (13k);
Week 15/1217 (10k).
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Bullock, Tatum serve up the charm in 'The Lost City'

By **LINDSEY BAHR**
AP Film Writer

"The Lost City" is the kind of charming, star-driven, action-adventure that makes moviemaking look easy and effortless from the outside. It's hard to imagine a world in which you pair Sandra Bullock and Channing Tatum as a romance novelist and her himbo cover model on a "Romancing the Stone"-esque journey not being enjoyable. Throw in a bit of Brad Pitt kicking butt without breaking a sweat and a dash of Daniel Radcliffe as an eccentric heir and you've got a sure-fire hit, right?

But if star charisma alone was enough to make a movie watchable, there would be many more good movies in the world. It's why "The Lost City" is such a special creation. Sure, it lives or dies on Bullock, Tatum and the ensemble (including a delightful Da'Vine Joy Randolph and Patti Harrison), but there's also so much more that had to go right to make it work, which it does exceedingly well. It's the movie that "Jungle Cruise" wanted so desperately to be.

In the case of "The Lost City," directed by brothers Aaron and Adam Nee, it seems to



This image released by Paramount Pictures shows Sandra Bullock, left, and Channing Tatum in a scene from "The Lost City."

Associated Press

start with the script which is lean, smart and self-aware in a way that both winks at the absurdities of fish-out-of-water movies and pays homage to what we love about them. It's never snarky or condescending. As Loretta and Alan, Bullock and Tatum are pitted against one another as the brain and the beauty. She's a writer who found success writing steamy romance novels, though she'd rather be an academic. He's a

yellow lab with a heart of gold and a vocabulary of malapropisms. She thinks he's little more than a walking six-pack, but he's fascinated by her and harbors a bit of a crush, so he's more than eager to stage a rescue attempt when she's abducted from a book event.

Usually having four writers (both Nees, Oren Uziel and Dana Fox) and a story by credit (Seth Gordon) on a project is a bit of a li-

ability, indicating re-writes, disagreement and an attempt to please everyone. Cinephiles learn to celebrate individual vision and treat collaboration as suspect. And yet "The Lost City" seems to have been the product of a fair amount of teamwork, on screen and off -- perhaps a throwback to the days when studio notes were a good thing and could make a project better.

Take Lorretta who is imme-

diately against the outfit her book agent Beth (Randolph) has selected for her to wear at a promotional event for her new book. It's a dangerously low-cut and tight purple sequin jumpsuit that she complains gives her a wedgie in the front and the back. Beth tells her to suck it up: She only has to wear it for two hours. Of course that's not the case when she's kidnapped by Radcliffe's polite psychopath Abigail Fairfax and taken to a lost island where he hopes she can help him locate an ancient artifact. The outfit, which was too tight for her to comfortably get up on a barstool at the event, never becomes more practical in the wild and its inconveniences are never brushed aside. In other words, nothing in "The Lost City" is a throwaway one-off joke, even a purple sequin jumpsuit. They commit. And Bullock and Tatum are screwball gold together. Neither are ever too vain for the bit, and she especially gets to show off her skills as a physical comedian.

The only problem with "The Lost City" is that its first hour is so strong, lively and funny that it starts to run out of steam by the climax. □

Academy condemns Will Smith's actions, launches review



Will Smith, right, hits presenter Chris Rock on stage while presenting the award for best documentary feature at the Oscars on Sunday, March 27, 2022, at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles.

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences on Monday said it condemns the actions of Will Smith during Sunday night's Os-

cars and it will launch a formal review of his slapping of presenter Chris Rock.

In a statement Monday, the film academy said: "The Academy condemns

the actions of Mr. Smith at last night's show. We have officially started a formal review around the incident and will explore further action and consequences in accordance with our by-laws, standards of conduct and California law."

Smith stunned the Dolby Theatre crowd and viewers at home when he took the stage during Rock's remarks after the comedian made a joke about Jada Pinkett Smith, Smith's wife. Rock said, "Jada, I love you. 'G.I. Jane 2,' can't wait to see it." The joke touched a nerve. Pinkett Smith, whose head is shaved, has spoken publicly about her alopecia diagnosis. Rock has also previously joked about her. Rock hosted the 2016

Oscars, when some were boycotting the ceremony over the #OscarsSoWhite group of nominees, including the Smiths. Said Rock: "Jada boycotting the Oscars is like me boycotting Rihanna's panties. I wasn't invited."

Smith strode on stage and slapped Rock across the face. Back in his seat, Smith twice shouted for Rock to "get my wife's name out your (expletive) mouth." His words echoed clearly throughout the Dolby, though ABC cut the audio for about 15 seconds. Within an hour, Smith won best actor. During his acceptance speech, Smith apologized to the academy. After the show Sunday night, the academy posted

a statement condemning violence. The Los Angeles Police Department said Sunday it was aware of a slapping incident at the Oscars but said the person involved had declined to file a police report.

Some academy members, like writer-producer Marshall Herskovitz, called for the academy to take disciplinary action against Smith.

"He disgraced our entire community tonight," wrote Herskovitz on Twitter.

Whoopi Goldberg, a member of the Academy's board of governors, said Monday on "The View": "We're not going to take that Oscar from him. There will be consequences, I'm sure." □

Welcome back: Pujols returns home, finds fit with Cardinals

By **CHUCK KING**

JUPITER, Fla. (AP) — With a wave of his hand and a tip of the cap, Albert Pujols walked back into the world of the St. Louis Cardinals. Wearing a big smile and his familiar red No. 5 jersey, Pujols emerged from beyond the right field wall at Roger Dean Stadium between the first and second innings of a game against Houston on Monday. Cardinals pitchers, catchers and coaches sitting on chairs far down the line stood to acknowledge the three-time NL MVP, as did the fans in the stands. Pujols strolled around to the St. Louis dugout on the third base side, where he was greeted with hearty hugs and high-fives.

All these years later, the slugger who helped the Cardinals win two World Series championship was home. The Cardinals and Pujols agreed to a \$2.5 million, one-year contract, giving him a chance to end his career in the place where it started. He would earn \$150,000 for World Series MVP, \$100,000 each for All-Star, Gold Glove, League Championship Series and MVP, and \$50,000 each for



Los Angeles Dodgers' Albert Pujols celebrates Chris Taylor's two-run home run in the second inning against the Atlanta Braves in Game 5 of baseball's National League Championship Series on Oct. 21, 2021, in Los Angeles.

Associated Press

Silver Slugger and finishing second and 10th in MVP voting. The 42-year-old Pujols spent part of Monday video conferencing with 39-year-old Cardinals catcher Yadier Molina, his teammate during eight seasons in St. Louis. "I'm happy for him to be here," Molina said. "It's going to be a fun year." Pujols played the first 11

years of his career in St. Louis, teaming with Molina to lead the Cardinals to the 2006 and 2011 World Series titles. "We've only got one thing in mind — winning another championship," Molina said. Prior to Monday's Grapefruit League game, Cardinals center fielder Harrison Bader posted a photo on social media of what ap-

peared to be a No. 5 Pujols jersey hanging in a Cardinals' locker. Pujols doesn't swing nearly as fearsome a bat as he did during his St. Louis hey-day, but the Cardinals decided they have a spot for a designated hitter who can hit left-handed pitching. That's one thing Pujols still does well. Pujols hit a combined .236 for the Los Angeles Angels

and Dodgers last season, but hit .294 with a .939 OPS against lefties. Pujols needs 21 homers to become the fourth career major leaguer to hit 700 in a career. "Adding someone like that is crazy important," first-year manager Oliver Marmol said. "What he does with that clubhouse outside of his skill set is unbelievable." The deal brings Pujols back to where he became one of the game's most powerful and dangerous all-around hitters. The NL Rookie of the Year in 2001 hit at least .300 with at least 30 homers and 100 RBIs in each of his first 10 seasons in St. Louis. A wildly popular player in St. Louis, Pujols played his last game for the Cardinals on Oct. 28, 2011, a Game 7 win over Texas in the World Series. Pujols won those three MVP awards and made nine All-Star teams with the Cardinals before signing a 10-year, \$240 million deal with the Angels in 2012. He was waived by the Angels last May while hitting .198, and signed with the Dodgers, for whom he hit 12 homers and drove in 38 runs in 85 games. □

Osaka makes Miami quarterfinals, says she's more grateful

By **TIM REYNOLDS**

AP Sports Writer

MIAMI GARDENS, Fla. (AP)

— Making the quarterfinals at a tournament used to be no big deal for Naomi Osaka. It was only a shock if it didn't happen. Things are a bit different now. The former world No. 1 has made it through to the quarterfinals at the Miami Open — just the second time she's managed to advance that deep in any tournament over the last year. Osaka beat Alison Riske of the U.S. 6-3, 6-4 on Monday, moving into a round-of-eight matchup with Danielle Collins. Osaka's only other quarterfinal appearance in the last year was at an Australian Open warmup tournament in Melbourne in January.

Before that, her most recent quarterfinals trip was at Miami a year ago. "It's really funny for me, because last year here I made it to the quarters, too," Osaka said. "It was after I won Australia and I wasn't that grateful. I kind of expected to win." Wins these days just mean more, after ongoing struggles and time away from the game to deal with her mental health. Her ranking in the world has dipped to No. 77 — it could get somewhere around No. 30 if she wins the Miami title — and she hasn't won a tournament since that Australian Open victory last year. But her stay in Miami so far has been nothing but happiness, with three easy wins — all in straight sets — and the added benefit of a

walkover victory in there as well. "This is really one of the funnest times of my life," Osaka said. "I'm really grateful." Collins, the No. 9 seed from the U.S., needed just over an hour Monday to win her fourth-round match against No. 8 Ons Jabeur, 6-2, 6-4. The win likely ensured that Collins is locked into the top 10 when the world rankings reset early next week. She could be as high as No. 8 depending on how far others go in the tournament. Collins is 0-2 in previous matches against Osaka, both straight-set losses on hard courts, one in 2018, the other in 2019. "When Naomi is at the top of her game, she's very, very hard to beat," Collins said. Daria Saville also got into



Naomi Osaka of Japan serves to Alison Riske, during the Miami Open tennis tournament, Monday, March 28, 2022, in Miami Gardens, Fla.

Associated Press

the quarterfinals, surviving a three-hour match to beat Lucia Bronzetti 5-7, 6-4, 7-5. Saville has climbed a staggering 500 spots in the world rankings in about a month and a half; she was 627th in the world in mid-February and could make

the top 100 if she wins her next match against either No. 22 Belinda Bencic or Aliaksandra Sasnovich. In the men's third round, Daniil Medvedev is now two wins away from reclaiming the No. 1 world ranking. □

NASCAR must reveal Keselowski's massive infraction

By JENNA FRYER

AP Auto Racing Writer

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) —

There is a problem with NASCAR and its sport-transforming new racecar.

We know NASCAR found that RFK Racing had made an illegal modification to a vendor-supplied spec part for the car. NASCAR then buried Brad Keselowski and his team with season-crippling penalties to apparently make it crystal clear the series is serious about its Next Gen car.

What we don't know: What the No. 6 team has been accused of doing or where it was trying to gain an advantage. NASCAR hasn't publicized what it found during a "teardown" inspection last week at its North Carolina facility. Keselowski isn't talking, citing his ongoing appeal.

It was just one big speculative mystery this weekend at Circuit of the Americas, where everyone wondered why Keselowski was hit with a staggering 100-point penalty. It dropped the 2012 champion, in his first season as driver and co-owner of Jack Roush's rebranded team, to last in the standings among full-time Cup Series drivers.

Driver after driver, including Sunday's winner, called on



Brad Keselowski steers his car through Turn 5 during qualifying for the NASCAR Cup Series auto race at Circuit of the Americas, Saturday, March 26, 2022, in Austin, Texas.

Associated Press

NASCAR to spill the details. The Next Gen has been the great equalizer through the first six races and has delivered everything promised, with much-improved racing and parity throughout the field.

Second-year team Trackhouse Racing suddenly seems very, very good, and new driver Ross Chastain delivered a breakthrough first win. Trackhouse, owned by former driver Justin Marks and Pitbull, is now a playoff team able to race with the big boys.

When the penalties against RFK were announced, Marks immediately called into Trackhouse with a directive to stay firmly within the rulebook.

"I want to know exactly what they did," Marks said. "If we get two parts from the same vendor and they don't look exactly the same? We are going right to NASCAR. That's a big penalty. I don't want our team penalized."

NASCAR President Steve Phelps on Saturday told The Associated Press he did not

know why his competition officials had not revealed what was found on the No. 6. Garage chatter honed in on an allegedly modified rear bumper, but nobody knows for sure.

This is counterintuitive to the core mission of the Next Gen, an industry-wide project that required total buy-in from every stakeholder. The car is supposed to be in the best interest of the series, a way for less-wealthy teams to compete since the basics are the same for all.

NASCAR rewrote its penalty system ahead of the Next Gen debut to warn it won't be messing around when it comes to the car. In addition to the points penalty, Keselowski's crew chief was suspended four races and fined \$100,000. And, should Keselowski somehow recover to still make the playoffs, he'll be docked 10 playoff points at the start of the championship stretch. Marks and the owners of Spire Motorsports both told AP their employees have been told they will be fired if they play outside the rules. Trackhouse and Spire are two of the small start-up new teams benefitting most from the Next Gen.

"I think if you ask everybody in the garage, we'd all like to see what they did," Spire co-owner Jeff Dickerson said. "Back in the day they used to show the parts, mostly to educate, so I think it would show that they know how to police this car and they aren't afraid to drop the hammer."

"This new car is our gamble, this was the mortgage, and we told our team on Day 1 that we will not be the example. So we want to know what was done on that car because we will not be caught in the same position." □

NFL makes adjustments to Rooney Rule to aid minority hiring



Pittsburgh Steelers football head coach Mike Tomlin, second left, arrives to speak to journalists at a coaches press availability during the NFL owner's meeting, Monday, March 28, 2022, at The Breakers resort in Palm Beach, Fla.

Associated Press

By BARRY WILNER

AP Pro Football Writer

PALM BEACH, Fla. (AP) —

To ensure more opportunities for diverse candidates,

the NFL has added requirements on the hiring of offensive assistant coaches, and women in general.

The moves announced

Monday at the owners meeting include adjustments to the Rooney Rule adopted in 2003 and amended frequently in attempts to enhance opportunities for people of color and women for nearly all league and team jobs.

Beginning this season, all 32 clubs must employ a female or a member of an ethnic or racial minority to serve as an offensive assistant coach. The person will receive a one-year contract and work closely with the head coach and offensive staff to gain experience.

In recent years, head coaches have predominantly had offensive backgrounds. The pipeline for minorities on that side of

the ball is lacking, as Steelers owner Art Rooney II reiterated Monday.

"We recognize we have seen progress on some fronts," said Rooney, chairman of the league's Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee, "but we still have a way to go on other fronts." Teams will receive league funding toward the coach's salary for up to two years. Overall, including women in all Rooney Rule requirements is designed to address under-representation of women in key football positions. The league believes this will "encourage the further identification and development of women candidates and the ability to provide them additional opportunity to in-

terview for open positions." Dasha Smith, the NFL's chief administrative officer and one of the league's highest-ranking females, noted that for the first time, a woman was interviewed for a general manager's position this year.

Smith also said that virtual interviews will no longer be acceptable for head coach and general manager positions, and there will be specific requirements for candidates to become offensive assistants. Those would include at least three years of experience on the college or pro level.

There currently are five minority head coaches in the NFL. There are seven Black general managers. □